



Taxpayer Satisfaction Survey Results 2001

Since 1992, the Department of Revenue (DOR) has conducted a Taxpayer Satisfaction Survey every three years. Responses to the survey help the Agency identify opportunities to improve our services and measure the impact of changes made as a result of prior surveys.

As in years past, the 2001 survey was administered by Washington State University's Social and Economic Research Center. The survey was sent to a representative sample of 3,200 businesses. Over 46 percent (1,468 businesses) responded. Of those businesses that responded, 130 chose the new option of responding via the Internet.

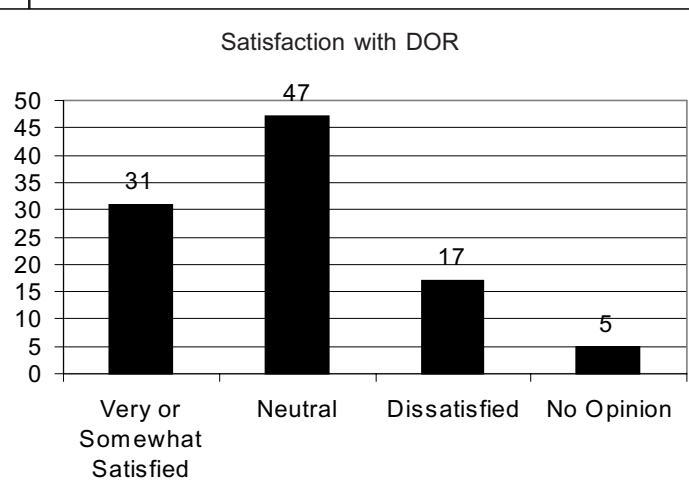
Once again, survey questions focused on the degree to which taxpayers are satisfied with the Department of Revenue. Businesses were asked questions about a wide variety of topics related to the Department. Subject areas included the Combined Excise Tax Return (CETR), types of contacts with the Department, quality of

information received, along with opinions about employees and the Department's web site.

Following are highlights from the 2001 Department of Revenue Taxpayer Satisfaction Survey results.

Satisfaction with DOR

As a result of feedback from the 1998 survey, a new question was added to 2001 survey. Businesses were asked to rate how satisfied they were with the Department's quality of service. Generally, respondents were satisfied with the quality of service provided by DOR. One-third of respondents indicated that they were somewhat or very satisfied with the Agency, while 47 percent remained neutral.



Only 17 percent indicated dissatisfaction with the Department. This question will now serve as a benchmark question for future surveys.

Revenue vs. State Employees
The majority of respondents continue to have a more

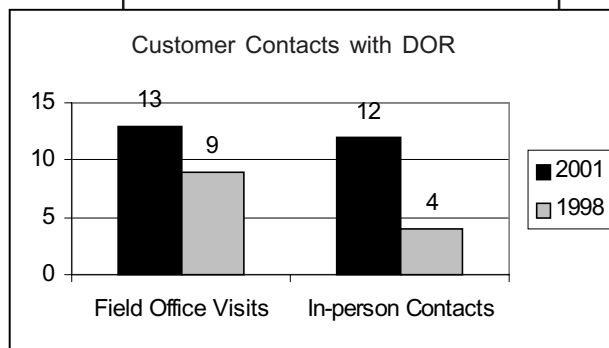
favorable opinion of DOR employees in comparison to other state employees. An encouraging finding was that while 24 percent of businesses have

generally negative views of state government employees, their opinions of Revenue employees was more favorable. In fact, overall, respondents gave Department employees a 57 percent favorable rating, compared to a 50 percent favorable rating for other state employees.

Value of Face-to-Face Contact
The value of face-to-face contact with Department of Revenue staff was demonstrated by an increase of in-person visits. The number of businesses that reported they met with a DOR representative jumped to 12 percent, compared to four percent in 1998. Cross-tabulation of

several questions indicated a variety of reasons taxpayers visited field offices including account change or registration, assistance with tax forms, collection or billing issues, and general business tax information.

- 30 percent ranked collecting delinquent accounts, and
- 20 percent ranked pursuing unpaid taxes on out-of-state vehicles as the Department's most important enforcement function.



Enforcement Functions

Enforcement functions continue to be valued by taxpayers. The survey asked customers which of three enforcement functions provided by the Department they felt was **most important**:

- 50 percent of all respondents chose pursuing unlicensed businesses,

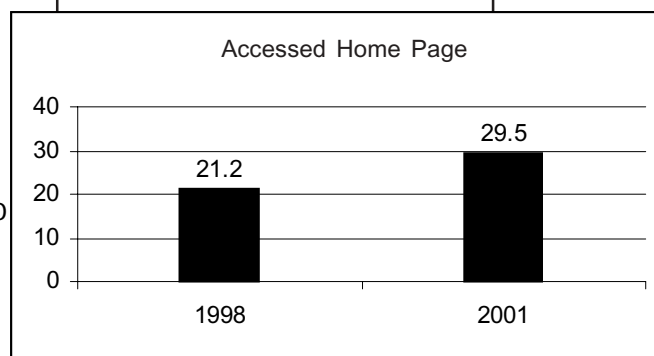
Internet Usage

Recent Internet redesign and marketing efforts (e.g., articles in *Tax Facts*) appear to have generated positive feedback.

Nearly 70 percent of respondents rated the home page as either useful or somewhat useful, a 25 percent improvement compared to the 1998 survey.

Since 1998, the survey noted a one-third increase in those who have Internet access and have accessed the Department of Revenue's home page. In response to feedback

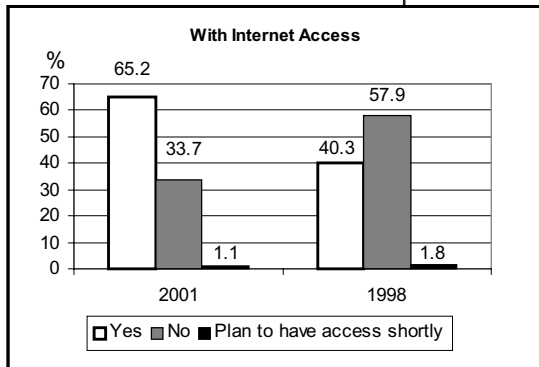
from taxpayers, the Department of Revenue continues to make self-help options



available on-line 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Who's OnLine?

Ninety-seven percent of large businesses have Internet access, compared to 65 percent of small businesses. Interestingly,



67 percent of large businesses have accessed DOR's home page, but only 29 percent of small businesses have done so. Additionally, retail and construction businesses visit DOR's home page the least, while transportation and utility industries visit the most.

Collections

The mission of the Washington State Department of Revenue is to fairly and efficiently collect revenues, administer programs to fund public services, and advocate sound tax policy.

In order to fulfill the mission, the Department is committed to our on-going efforts to educate taxpayers and increase media coverage about the collection process. According to the survey, these efforts seem to have paid off.

In 2001, 41 percent of respondents were aware of DOR's enforcement activities, compared with just 30 percent in 1998. In addition, 35

percent of respondents found the Department's collection process fair and equitable in 2001, compared with only 28 percent in 1998. Eight percent fewer businesses found the Department too aggressive in collecting delinquent taxes compared to the 1998 survey.

What's Next?

The 2001 Taxpayer Satisfaction Survey and the Department's Quality Improvement Program are ensuring available resources are put to the best use in meeting taxpayers' needs and

encouraging voluntary compliance. The results of the survey are being used to identify areas for improvement and necessary action, as well as creating a baseline for the Agency to judge progress in improving service quality. Several divisions have begun implementing improvements to specific programs.

The Department is looking for ways to introduce more businesses, especially small businesses, to the new features and information available on the web site. In addition, industry-specific efforts to familiarize retail and construction businesses with the web site are being taken.

For more information on the survey results, please contact Vikki Smith, Taxpayer Services' Assistant Director at (360) 486-2110.